ON CHAR

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

On Char

(1890 - 1976)

On Char was born in Kohala, Hawaii where his Chinese immigrant parents were contract laborers at the Kohala Plantation. By the time On Char was eight, his father owned a coffee plantation in Keauhou Kona. In 1900 On Char left his family to live with friends who owned a grocery store in Honolulu.

Starting with ten cents, On Char earned five hundred dollars in two years as a newspaper boy. He gave this money to his parents to start a family grocery store. Later he leased some property and built two homes on it, renting one and living in the other. In 1904 he went to work for a photagrapher named Perkins and in 1907 opened his own photographic studio, City Photo Company, with three partners. After he retired in 1954, stocks and bonds became On Char's hobby.

This transcript, which purposely retains the distinctive dialectic speech of On Char, is an account of his personal and business experiences.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

INTERVIEW WITH ON CHAR

At his Liliha home, 602 Holokahana Lane, Honolulu, 96817

November 26, 1971

C: On Char

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

M: Were you born here?

C: Yes, in Kohala.

M: Oh you were?

C: Yeh, Kohala, Hawaii.

M: I want to get the microphone close enough to you so it'll pick up your voice.

C: I see. Uh huh. (microphone noises) See, I born in Kohala in 1890. February 21st. Then, about eight years old then I went to Kona to Keauhou. That's where my father had a coffee plantation.

M: This was where, at Kona?

C: Kona, yeh, at Keauhou. That's where the coffee's stationed. Then when about ten years old, then I came to Honolulu.

M: With your father?

C: No, only myself came and then I stayed with some friends in a what they call grocery store.

M: Where was this at?

C: Right over here near the Asylum Road [the former name of a street opposite Kaiulani School] just about a block from here [Liliha Street]. You see, during those times my father got a coffee plantation and some school boys from Mills School--Chinese boys who go to school and summertime they go to Kona to my father's picking coffee during the summertime. So after they know me they said, "Say, why don't you go to my friend's grocery store. You can learn

something there. Just stay there and he'll give you eat; he'll give you the place to stay." So I thought, well, maybe a good chance to come down Honolulu. So that's how I came to Honolulu. 1900. It's in 1900.

Well, during that time there and when I stayed in the store, you know how it is when a young fellow get lots of boys to play with. When come to Saturday, this man tell me, "You go buy some food." You know, go down to Chinatown to buy some food. So Saturday, well, he told me to go in the morning about nine o'clock and come back, say, about ten, eleven o'clock. So, you know, go and come right back.

Then bymby get the idea some boys we go play together and then go down the fish market. The way I started, I worked in that store the school time and all that and when come to Saturday, that's only day off I had so I go with the boys. This man only give me thirty-five cents to go and buy pork, buy fish, and buy cabbage. Those days, very, very reasonable. It's cheap, you see. So instead that, when I go down the Hawaiian boys tell me, "We go buy paper and sell." So that thirty-five cents, I had to be real careful so I go buy ten cents to the newspaper. Go all the way from down there, go down to Oahu Railroad. They had the Hawaii newspaper. And then we buy ten cents. We get four. You know, four paper. Then by the time we go down Bethel Street, they have another Advertiser--have another Hawaiian newspaper, you see, in the morning. So with the ten cents I bought, I sold it and I get twenty cents, you see. So I put that thirty-five cents in the pocket till I ready to come home then I go buy that stuff. I use that ten cents, buy another four Hawaiian paper. So I sell, I get twenty cents. Well, afternoon when about two o'clock and we go buy the Hawaiian Star. You know, those days Hawaiian Star. And then, after we sell the Star, then comes the Bulletin. With that ten cents, I make forty cents that day. (Lynda laughs) That Saturday.

So I keep on doing that. So next Saturday, why, I get some money but the money that I sold the paper I can not put in my pocket. You know, when I come home bymby they might check where the money come from and you have to explain. Well, on my way home I'd hide it on the road, you know, where the old Palama Settlement. You know they have fence posts going up so I have to see where the gate and then how many posts, then I'll put it under there--in there--(Lynda laughs) until next Saturday, I go there and pick that money up, I got forty cents. Instead of buying ten cents I buy twenty cents. I get eight and keep on that way there. I keep on doing that every Saturday, why, I make sometimes over a dollar something, you see, so that's how my ambition start--selling newspaper--because my father and mother told me that everytime when we go,

"Don't take anybody's money unless your own!" You know, what you make. So I keep that in mind to do that and going on until about two years, then my parents came down to Honolulu, you see.

So I started. I start to sell newspapers. Go out, go in the morning, go the Advertiser and then go that way there, why, I think during the two year I make over five hundred dollars. You know, the old days, pretty good so I gave to my parents to open a store right down here on School Street. But it didn't come out too good because those days very few and the business is hard. We have a big family. So anyway, what we have in the store we just have to eat, you know, 'cause my parents wasn't working. So we used that and then go out until, oh, about 1904. We stay around this neighborhood.

Now I live in this place here over sixty-two years. Right here, this area. The thing is when I used to work in the store--in that grocery store--this girl--oh, she's very young girl, you know, who owned this. The grandfather had given to her but she belonged to Kamehameha School and when she come out, you know, I was a small little boy and I have a long queue. You know, that queue?

M: Um hm. Um hm.

C: You know when we play together he kid me all the time. He said, "Pake boy! Pake boy!" ["Chinese boy! Chinese boy!"] You see, he like me. And so, after awhile she have her property--all this her own property here--so she lease it. I couldn't take it because I'm too young. You know, you can not make the paper under my name, so make it to my mother until I was eighteen years old, then the lady then put it under my name so this is the place here. I get, oh, I think there's almost an acre in it those days.

After she get married, the husband work for the reform school. You know reform school?

M: Reformatory school?

C: Yeh, for naughty boys, you know, go in there. So she works there and they stay there until, oh, by that time she get eleven children. They're married. It's a Hawaiian that stay there and we used to go down to this place. We're just like the family. They say, "Oh, come down to my place and stay Saturday night." That time I wasn't married, you see, nineteen. So after that we get on, we've been, oh, very friendly. Almost the place like we taking care. Of course I have a business idea, you know, that when I have a place I have to make money on it so I had built a house--a couple house--and I rent it out and all that.

M: Then it was just a lease.

C: A lease, yes.

M: You didn't actually buy the property.

C: No, don't have to buy from them. The lease, my mother had it for ten years only. When it comes to my time, well we make a new lease so I get fifteen years. You know, fifteen. And after awhile, when it comes to 1904, then I was about fourteen years old, then I went work for Perkins--photographer. That's how I . . .

M: Perkins?

C: Perkins, yeh. Oldover Perkins (phonetic).

M: Oliver Perkins?

C: Yeh, Perkins. I think the studio is right over where at the present time is still there the Hub. Hub [Menswear] store. The clothing store, Hub [at 1101 Fort Street]. And right across that's the Benson, Smith [and Company] drug store, you know, and all that. Mr. Watumull came in and he get a place way up here on Fort Street, right across the Catholic Church. That's where the old store at. I've been taking picture of all those, his store and all that, all the time and Mr. Watumull used to come down to our studio very, very often because he want to see the pictures and he's a very nice gentleman. He's a tall, slim, kind of dark, you know, like a Hawaiian. He's a very, very good man and he always come.

So I started with the studio and when I was working at the studio I still go sell papers.

M: When did you go to school in all this?

C: Well, I went to school over Kaiulani School. I went there until 1904, until about fourteen. Well, in those days when you come to third grade, you know, I didn't finish my fourth grade there so I had to go to the photographer's to work especially that time because my father and mother, when they get here about 1904, you know, we get the lease and then she do some planting--taro, sugar cane, in all this area--so that's how we started to go out, see. So then I start my photography, working for Perkins. And 1907 then I left Perkins and started with three, four-man company to run our own studio that I think we bought from K. M. Henry. See, here's the old studio.

M: Where was that?

C: It's right on Hotel Street near Fort and so that's where we start the studio.

M: Who were the other people?

C: The other people? Oh, they're dead. Some of them passed away. That's Mr. Ming and Mr. Lee Hoy. Oh, it's quite a few. And K. T. Kwai. There's one more, Henry Chung Chau, is still living. I think he's about seventy-four years old, a couple of year older than I am. No, over eighty. I'm eighty-one, see.

M: Yeh.

C: He's about eighty-three or eighty-four. So that's the start and when I running that studio then, at 1911, I'm married to my wife.

M: How did you meet her?

C: Well, those days it's a very funny way to go. We go under the what they call the old style, the matchmaker. My uncle know my wife's father and I never see her before. I only see her once then we get married. You see, the old times. Well, to me, when I look back and look how the conditions go, I think it's more--well, I don't know . . .

M: It worked out just as well maybe.

C: Yeh, maybe. The people say, "Well, that kind of love is different than what you playing around." It's the one way. Of course, now I have five girls, four boys. We have a big family. My father have nine too but my landlord get eleven, you see.

Now, how I get this place here: when it come to 1924, the lady passed away.

M: Uh huh, the Hawaiian lady.

C: The Hawaiian lady died so the estate had to sell the place. Now it was a very peculiar way how to get this place here. At the beginning, under the lease--oh, 1918 and then about 1920--she want to come up town all the time so she want buy automobile because the one they get was get old. Then she need more money. So only thing is, I haven't got the money so I have to go to the bank to show what can I borrow the money. She wanted six hundred dollars so I go to the bank and borrow the money, then I have to pay installments to the bank. The reason I did that--buy the automobile--was she give me ten years more lease. You know, longer lease, so the bank can say, "Well, that thing is safe be-

cause you get the long lease and time to pay." So that's how we come to extend the lease.

Then when go a little further on, she want to buy a new car. That car getting old, so that way there she wanted more money. She give another ten year. Well, by that time she died. I get forty-five year lease on the place. Forty-five years. And then, of course, by that long a lease then I can get the money to build more houses. You know, the bank always lend you by what you have, what you put on, see, so they know I get that way there.

So when she died, the estate had to sell the land, see, to auction. That Mr. Hubert (phonetic) was the attorney who take care of that estate so he called me down to his office and explained to me how this thing go on. The husband told him that I was very friendly, sort of like the family, so no use sell to somebody else but nobody would buy because I had a long lease. So, well how much that thing is worth? That's a very funny thing to come up.

When it come to the newspaper, to auction certain place where, you know, how big a area and all that's in there, why, plenty people wanted to buy it because it's auction property. So when they get all the people around there and then Mr. Hubert, the attorney, explain--read that thing there and all that. I was there. He point out that Mr. On Char have a lease. "Now you folks guess how many year lease he have there." You know, people were curious. They want to know how many years. "Well," he say, "get over forty years." They combed their hair and then, you know, they're not interested. (Lynda laughs) Nobody want to buy.

So anyway, we get some Chinese friends. They say, "On Char, that attorney say we have to get three bidders before that come to an order." Anybody come that third bid before we can, so if anybody want to buy, why, from third bid on you can bid as many times as you want to. So he say, "Who's interested in that thing? How much would you offer?" And this Chinese fellow said, "I bid the first bid." Well, you know, they only bid $1,000 and the other one said, "Oh, I bid $2,000" just to make a bid. He knows that even one of the two houses is worth more than four or five thousand dollars. Then they come on there. "Well, this is the last bid that who can ever bid it, why, he get the right to come to an order." So I put $5,000. Those fellows almost killed me and said, "Why you want to bid that? Three thousand dollars we could get it." Well, I didn't want to tell them why. They don't know that thing's there because we already agreed. (Lynda laughs)

He get eleven children all under fourteen years old so they only get fifty-five dollars rent from me so that's not enough. So Mr. Hubert say, "Well, you know the friend

and you know how much that thing there, you think what it's worth to you." I just put up more than five thousand dollars worth of buildings so I put on that what it's worth to me on the buildings, see, so five thousand dollars. He said, "Well, anybody else want to bid over that?" Oh, everybody want to kill On Char because he want to bid too much. So after that thing [the bids] closed, then I explained to the friends who help me. I told them they get eleven children and I like to help them out because I don't have to pay them cash anyway so the bank can give them that money to help their children. So that way there I thought what my father and mother say, "Always be honest with yourself." That's why we're still here to enjoy ourselves, you see, from 1924--from there on. I get a big place. I sold half of it for $17,000 after the war so I can do something else with the things here. It's very long, my life is. I have to trust myself, you know, to be honest and then to get this because that's how the conditions go. To me, I think it pays to be honest.

I started [at the] Advertiser and even today I own a few hundred share of Advertiser. I never forget that year because Mr. Charlie Crane is the manager of that Advertiser. You know, before all the business of the boss always, in the business, attend to the customers and all that happened. I was a Chinese newsboy and they get plenty Portuguese. They don't like the Chinese boy to get ahead, you know, so I asked one of the working man--one Hawaiian man--if he can ask the boss to let me sell newspapers for the house. You know what I mean, for the house?

My mother only give me one dollar to buy paper so one dollar only get forty paper but you have to get some change. I get four brother--Yew Char, Hin Char, Tin Char and myself. We get four. When you buy the newspaper, you buy forty for one dollar you'll have to get some change. Sometime you go run around and the Hawaiian fellow give you a quarter, you get no change you lose a sale, so we always try to keep some. So that's why I ask to sell for the office [or for the house], they call it. They say they never do that before, so I told them, "Well, I sell and I bring all the money that I make and then they give me what I'm supposed to have."

In those days, when I was fourteen years old we don't know how to count the money and all that thing there, so. Well, when I used to go get newspaper I used to get about forty to eighty papers or sometimes a hundred when it come to Sunday, see, so we can be wide out with my brothers and all that selling. The dollar we have we just use for change.

The funny thing that came up is this: on one Sunday I took 150 papers to go out and sell and happened that day that Mr. Charlie Crane, the manager, was at the office

taking care. You know, he stayed there until about one o'clock Sunday to collect all the boys who get newspaper they want return so they can give a piece of paper. Suppose you buy twenty paper, you only sell sixteen, you got four more so he give you one good for next day. Mine, I have to take all the money in there. He take all the money and give me the money. So that Sunday I think I sold about 150. I think about ten or eleven left. That came over quite a bit--a bunch of money--but I didn't know how to count.

So when I put the paper all on the counter, "Have you come with the money?" Then, "Here yours," and then he throw that thing in the cigar box, you know, so I had to go downstairs, see how much we made--the brothers. So we put stone here until everyone is. . . . So the man give us I think over three dollars something. It's too much. You know, it was too much because he figure two for a nickel, see, but the newspaper been selling three for a dime till about a couple of weeks ago. They raised the price, give you less. You give your ten cent, you only get three instead of four. So that confused you. You know, we can not count, so we put the stone--one here, we get a nickel. Every three we sell we get a nickel. So the stones got too much, so I run upstairs and tell Mr. Crane, "Charlie!" You know those days we just call the first names. "Charlie! I get too much money." He say, "Why is that too much money? Didn't you sell?" I say, "Today's Sunday!" "What's Sunday got to do?" So I explain, "You know, two Sundays ago they only give ten cents for three." "Oh," he scratch his head, "that's right." You know what he did? He just take a quarter and throw in there. "Have a good time!"

Whew, I run downstairs. I get some extra money so, instead of eating that beef stew, we have ham and eggs for lunch. (Lynda laughs) From there on I never forget. I told my brothers, I say, "It pay to be honest. We can keep that." After doing that, you know what Mr. Charlie Crane told those people downstairs at the newspaper? "When this boy come around here, you don't have to count them. Let him count them and take and let him bring the money back." Sometime I take two hundred out and I give them all the money. You see, that's why I never forget that occasion. (recorder is turned off and on again)

M: Yeh, okay.

C: You know the old days business, the Advertiser or Star-Bulletin and some of those big business, they don't sell their stock to anybody. Either family or friends, it's a closed, so at the Advertiser they don't sell to anybody outside. They only sell to employees and some of those

family. The bookkeeper knows me real well so I think when he died nobody wanted to buy his share--I think about eleven hundred share--and he give it to Chinn Ho and Chinn Ho called me to go down. He say, "On Char, you want to make some money?" I say, "Well, anything that's honest I'm willing to." He say, "Here's eleven hundred share and you go sell to your friends--eleven dollars a share." So a hundred share was only eleven hundred dollars. That's plenty money so I couldn't keep them all. Anyway, I get about five hundred share and the other I sell to the friends.

I know the newspaper and I know the value of that land they get there, the big building--the Advertiser. When come to the business, good--better; they sold that--I think their stock went up to seventeen, eighteen dollars and all my friends sold it to somebody else. They didn't tell me, see, but I told them before, "If you want to sell, tell me so I can get the money. I know how to go and borrow the money from the bank." You know, being in business they trust me. So what I have, when the thing came up to thirty, forty dollars I sold half of it so I get all my free money. So those people say, "Well, when you want to sell," sell to them. I tell them I keep it for souvenir. They want slap me. They say, "Why you want to keep it a souvenir? You get the money and go buy something else." I say in my heart, "If good for you, must be good for me," so I keep; I hang on. So I keep on telling that, "Well, I get the children. I want to keep that for souvenir." It's the honest money. That's the way I learned the business: to be honest, well, you get there. So I keep on. And I know the family--Mr. [Lorrin P.] Thurston, the Twigg-Smiths and all. We get into meeting and all that so I know. So you know what that stock today? It's $150 a share.

M: Oh wow.

C: Oh yes, I just sold to good friend of mine. He's been doing lots of things, the father, this Mr. Sutton. You heard of Mr. Sutton?

M: Yeh.

C: That attorney. That Ike Sutton. The father treat me very nice before when he worked for Bishop Trust, then Hawaiian Trust, where I rent the studio from them. Oh, he was very nice to me, so everytime this son, Ike, say, "When you want to sell, sell it to me." He wanted to get there to be a big shot someday, see. So he took over some. I still get some yet. I'm going to keep that for my grandchildren to tell them why that thing is good. So that's the finance things to keep that. So that's how my life

goes, you know, to be honest to myself. That's how that thing come out.

M: In 1911 when you went into business, that's when you went into business for yourself?

C: Yes, that business was a partnership and then come in later on, not making money so everybody didn't want to own anything. They sell it to me and my brother Yew Char.

M: Yew Char is your brother.

C: Yeh, yeh. Brother Yew Char. (Counter at 402)

END OF SIDE 1/1ST TAPE

So after that, I think way back 1920, '22, then Yew Char sold it to me, see, so from there on I run up to, oh, till nineteen. . . . I retired in photography business 1954. I started 1904, 1954 I make fifty years so I give it to the children to run the place and they didn't do too good because too many studios and people not taking so much pictures. But the best time was during the wartime, from 1941 to 1944. That's the time we made the money at that time, see. Then I retire 1954. From there on, my hobby now is stock and bonds. Just buy stock. That's why you find all these papers here and all up here. (Lynda chuckles) My grandchildren come over here to help me. They learn, they learn something. To keep up; to keep the thing going.

M: You've got quite an office really.

C: So only thing we have very hardluck is my wife who's been sick for six years, you know, in and out, in and out. Bymby I show you where I make all that teraphim (phonetic). Now she start to walk again. That's how that thing go out.

I think I was looking for something the other day. Let's see, where's that thing. (shuffling of papers) We have a letter here. The Hawaiian Trust is very, very nice to me. Get this in here. I think this the time that I--see, 1959 when business was very bad and here's what my son wrote to the Hawaiian Trust to do a favor. (long silence while Lynda reads the letter)

M: Hmm, that's very nice. Who wrote this?

C: That's my son, because I told him to write a letter to the Hawaiian Trust. (long pause)

M: Hm. City Photo Company that was.

C: Yeh, City Photo. They was very, very, very nice. You see, some other company, if you cannot run your business, well, you just pack and move--get out--and you have to take care, but they were very nice. They even let us rent their place out to somebody else so my son can get some income on that thing there. I know no other owner would do things like that there to prevent it. They know me so well. They trust that been there over forty years doing business.

M: You rented part of their building?

C: No, that studio, after when my son couldn't run it, we rent it to another fellow here--another fellow who owned a studio--to move in there so he can use all the equipment.

M: Oh, I see. But you were in the Hawaiian Trust Building.

C: Yeh, they're the agent. That's the William March (phonetic) Building. You know that building where that Bethel and Hotel [streets]? Now it's a parking lot.

M: Yeh.

C: That place was burned, you know.

M: Yeh.

C: You see, that thing that happened, it's very, very . . .

M: Oh I see, Hawaiian Trust was the agent for the property.

C: Yeh, Hawaiian Trust was the agent of that. All that time there, after the time was up and this fellow didn't want to buy [the equipment], didn't want to pay any more rent, so I gave all the equipment--over $15,000 worth for all that equipment--to McKinley High School.

M: You did? Wow.

C: For them to use because nobody buy. And then, after a year or so, the government bought the place for parking. They have to tear down all that thing there, so this fellow move. Then all the negatives--I think it's over 100,000 negatives during my time taking those pictures for City Photo--I give them to the Bishop Museum. If your picture was taken there in 1930 or 1940 and you go to (Lynda chuckles) Bishop Museum and give your name and give the year, they have the negative there. All those nega-

tives. If I didn't do that, then what? Just destroy it? Get nothing. So lots of people they call me up. They say, "You still get my negative?" I say, "You go down to Bishop Museum." Oh, they doing well too. You know, people go there and order their picture.

M: Great idea. Yeh.

C: (explains he is hard of hearing and wears a hearing aid) Six months ago I couldn't hear nothing. Now it's getting better, I can hear. So if you don't mind, you just talk a little louder.

M: No, no, I'll speak up.

C: When come down to it, to the finish part of my life, why, so far, after I retired, I took my wife around the world twice, you know, to enjoy. But the last time we went purposely to go to England and then get her medical treatment. Even Dr. Carter from England send her the medicine here. He was very surprised. I send him some pictures of my wife walking. Now even today she's still using this doctor's medicine pill. Only small little one, she take three pills a day, why, it keep her up all the time.

M: Hmm.

C: You know, as I say, in this world here we have to learn the times and everything else. When we came back 1969, now she can start to walk again. At that time she couldn't. Go in the hospital, in and out, and then go to nursing home. Well, when you come to know it, that's the only place you have to go to the hospital and all that, but as I see it, nowadays it's different than the old days. I know when 1913 I go to the hospital to operate on the appendix, at that time it only cost forty-five dollars. I stay in the hospital ten days and didn't cost too much, but nowadays different. (talks about his wife's illness at length) You know how much when the [medical] bill came? Seventy-three hundred dollars!

M: Achhh. (recorder is turned off and on again) How do you spell that?

C: M-G S-H-E-E. Chinese call that Mg Shee.

M: Where were they [his parents] from?

C: They come from China.

M: What part?

C: From Tungkon.

M: Kung. K-U-N-G?

C: Yeh, K-O-N. Tungkon. That's where they came from.

M: When?

C: Well, I born 1890. They must be here two or three year before that. They went direct to Kohala Plantation as sugar contract immigrants.

M: Were they married when they arrived?

C: Yeh, yeh, they came together because my sister came with them and I was the oldest son. My sister pass away two years ago. She was eighty-six. From here they went back to China and pass on.

M: So your proper name is. . . ?

C: Eh?

M: What's your whole name, just On Char?

C: Yeh, well, Chinese say Char On, you see, and the English, On Char so it's reversed. (Lynda chuckles) That's shorter name. I have a middle name but we never use it so the thing is when they don't use it might as well forget, with all my dealing and everything; that bead, you know, and poverty. That's how. One time we even no more Char because their old style only Ah--Ah On, Ah On, Ah On. That's how that thing go. That's how they call us Ah On and all that. They have a name but the Hawaiian call so it's the easiest way to go "Oh, Ah On!" And that's how that thing. But we changed that thing there to On Char. That's the legal [name]. Everything is under that name, see, since I get a name. All the property get that thing there.

M: I see, uh huh.

C: Anyway, you read anything there, you know, maybe things like this here. You couldn't do it all in one what-you-call because sometime you have to twist it around or something and get that things what have done.

M: Yeh, right.

C: See, I've been photographer's commission, all that thing there.

M: Oh my!

C: See all the old diplomas up there, that's where I go to school way back 1921 in New York.

M: Photography?

C: Yeh. I got put on the light and then you can see. (recorder is turned off and on again)

You know how the things happen. You see this school here, they have a mango tree right back of this here. Now the boys been throwing stone [during] class and hid down there. Of course they didn't see that boys but happened one day I went out there, you know, the other boy he throw that stone over the mango tree and I followed this boy here and the boy run away from here and the teacher saw me. She reported to Mrs. [Nina] Fraser [principal of Kaiulani School] but she didn't see the other boy, you see, but I didn't throw the stone, the other fellow throw the stone. But she reported so they call me in after recess and they get a ruler. She said, "My boy, I hate to touch you with anything and I know how you are and very, very. . . ." Thursday I used to go school, all my school time when it come to a limited work--number work and all--that teacher said, "You don't have to, child, because your things always come out right." So I have to go outside and Mrs. Fraser told me, "Well, you have time. You just go help plant the taro outside," you know, for that period. It's only about twenty minutes I don't have to do any kind of number work because I was good on that--all the number work.

M: Uh huh.

C: But anyway, they say they hate to touch me but they say, "Some teacher reported that you throw stones at mango but even I don't think it but I have to do it just for the reason that report. I have to do it."

M: That's this lady. Mrs. Fraser.

C: Yes, that's the lady here (in photo). (long pause)

M: Hmm.

C: Yeh, my daughter, you know, she go Sunday School. She know how she like me and she wrote some memory. I give the one she wrote in the school. She never forget. That's way back in 1931. Even after she not in that school any more, why, we always good friend. I think she's got a daughter, May Fraser. May Fraser. (long pause)

M: I want to write something down before I forget it. Just a second.

C: Yeh. Yeh, May Fraser. If you see her, I think she . . . (Counter at 333)

END OF INTERVIEW

Re-transcribed and edited by Katherine B. Allen

Note: This transcript purposely retains the distinctive dialectic speech of On Char.

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THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.